



County of San Luis Obispo, California

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Parks and Recreation / Elizabeth Kavanaugh
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SUBJECT: Information on the Complete Streets Act

DATE: 9/25/2014

Recommendations: Complete Streets Act – Informational Only

Summary

Assembly Bill 1358, the Complete Streets Act, is intended to create a seamless, interconnected street and highway system that includes vehicles, bikes, pedestrians and transit. This requires cities, counties and Caltrans to plan for the needs of motorized and non-motorized travelers within the existing and future street and highway systems, with the goals of easing congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing physical activity of California's citizens.

This is accomplished in two ways:

- 1) At the time County Planning modifies the Circulation Element of the General Plan, it is to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways, and;
- 2) It directs Caltrans to fully consider the needs of non-motorized travelers in all programming, planning, funding and construction of transportation projects.

County Parks and Recreation is excited by the future opportunity this shift in Caltrans policy will present for funding of the multi-use trails that are called out in the Park and Recreation Element. However, it does little to change the policies or future projects of the Parks and Recreation Element because the Complete Streets Act applies to streets, sidewalks and bike lanes within a street system. Trails called out in the County Park and Recreation Element are class one trails that are separated from streets and highways and are complementary to, not part of, the Complete Streets Act.

Discussion:

What is the Complete Streets Act?

Assembly Bill 1358 Complete Streets Act (Complete Streets) is intended to lead to a seamless, interconnected transportation system. The goal of the Complete Streets Act is to address congestion, climate change and oil dependence by shifting shorter trips to lower-carbon modes. More than 66% of all trips that are one mile or shorter are done in a single occupancy vehicle. "Streets aren't just for cars, they're for people and with the Complete Streets Act local governments will plan for and build roadways that are safe and convenient for everyone — young or old, riding a bike or on foot, in a car or on a bus," said Assemblyman Leno. Getting people out of their cars and riding bicycles or the bus improves public health, air quality, eases congestion and reduces greenhouse emissions. Providing room for bicycling and walking within the street system helps adults and children get physical activity and gain independence.

To implement the Complete Streets this law requires:

- 1) Cities and counties to include Complete Streets policies as part of their general plans so that roadways are designed to safely accommodate all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, children, older people, and disabled people, as well as motorists.
- 2) Caltrans to "fully consider the needs of non-motorized travelers (including pedestrians, bicyclists and persons with disabilities) in all programming, funding, planning, maintenance, construction, operations and project development, and
- 3) The State of California to continue its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Complete Streets foster strong, healthy communities by playing an important role in livable communities, encouraging walking and bicycling for health, and providing a safe walking and bicycling environment is an essential part of improving public transportation.

What does Complete Streets mean to the County?

Every City and County in California must have a General Plan to regulate the long range use and development of property in an orderly fashion. It is intended to create orderly growth. The Circulation Element is one of the required Elements of the General Plan. The circulation element identifies efficient and effective circulation systems and the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares and other transportation routes.

Commencing January 1, 2011, upon any substantive revision of the Circulation Element, the County shall modify the Circulation Element to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.

Like most of the General Plan Elements, the County Planning Department (Planning) is the lead in updating and making sure "Complete Streets" are included in the Circulation Element updates and implemented with new projects. When the Planning Department works on an update to an area plan or a community plan, as they currently are in San Miguel and Los Osos, they update the Circulation Plan at the same time. Planning coordinates closely with Public Works to ensure the proper transportation routes are identified for all modes of transportation and are considered, as required, by Complete Streets.

What does Complete Streets mean to County Parks and Recreation?

Planning coordinates with County Parks and Recreation (Parks) as they do with Public Works in the updating of General Plan Documents. Parks has worked closely with Planning on both the Los Osos and San Miguel efforts in considering new recreation uses desired by the community, identifying needs and possible locations for new or expanded parks, and where trails should be located within the community. Parks also reviews new development projects for opportunities and legal nexus for requiring land for and/or improvements of new parks and trails.

Complete Streets is a law that is intended to make streets safe for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit vehicles, truckers, and motorists. Both Public Work and Parks shares responsibility for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the County. The division of the work is Public Work's provides sidewalks and bike lanes as part of the street system, and Parks provides multi-use trails that are separated from the street. The multi-use trails that are called out in the Park and Recreation Element (PRE) are complementary to streets, sidewalks and bike lanes called for in Complete Streets and provided by Public Works as part of the street system. At some point the PRE will be updated, and at that time consideration of all other pertinent County elements and plans will be considered, but the Complete Streets policy does not drive an update of the PRE. The main driver for a PRE update will be significant changes and growth in our County's population and changing needs/wants regarding park facilities and recreation programs.

A benefit to Park's projects provided by Complete Streets is it directs Caltrans to "fully consider the needs of non-motorized travelers (including pedestrians, bicyclists and persons with disabilities) in all programming, planning, and construction of transportation projects" Caltrans is the funnel in which most federal and state transportation dollars pass through. In previous decades most of Caltrans goals, funds, and efforts were geared toward vehicle projects. However, in the last few years funding funneled through Caltrans and its support of multi-use trail projects has become more available and Parks hopes to see this trend continue.

People of all ages and abilities want to go places safely and conveniently. Whether they drive, walk, bike, or ride a bus or train, Complete Streets policy leads to more choices for getting around, cleaner air and healthier and more independent citizenry.

Other Agency Involvement:

Public Works and Planning provided information on how they implement the Complete Streets Act

Financial Considerations:

None

Attachments

1. Assembly Bill 1358 - The Complete Streets Act

